



ALBERT TIMES

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“Don't be warped - trawl for fish, not birds”

From the desk of Admiral Albert Ross, MBE (Mighty Big Eater)

Well Mabel and I are back on the nest, preparing for another chick, and so it's time to get the plans sorted for the “free feeds” during the squid season again. I have just received some of the seabird reports from last year. There's more to the seabird mitigation work than just what the fisherman and we birds do out on the water. There's a whole lot of data collection, modelling, reports, analysis, meetings and discussions going on behind the scenes. This all costs the government and industry hundreds of thousands (if not millions) of dollars each year; I could buy a heap of “free feeds” with that kind of dosh. The bloody do-gooders and “chattering classes” always have plenty of opinions on everything but actually could do with a little more of a “hands on” approach, what!

The squid vessel operators are having their annual DWG squid season meeting again this month. This brings together the vessel operators to discuss any issues arising from the previous season and all the standards and operational requirements' for the up and coming season. I will drop a 'Stool Pigeon' in to the DWG meeting to find out what they are doing with all that juicy offal. I am also calling the cousins to HQ for a meeting to see how we can keep those free feeds up to the flock while staying out of harms ways this squid season.

There has been a reduction in cousins captured over the past few seasons so we need to make sure those “crazy” white-capped cousins of mine don't get carried away and “caught up” in all the commotion. What!

Thanks to Nici from SeaFIC for her wise words.

Chow Albert

Steady Progress

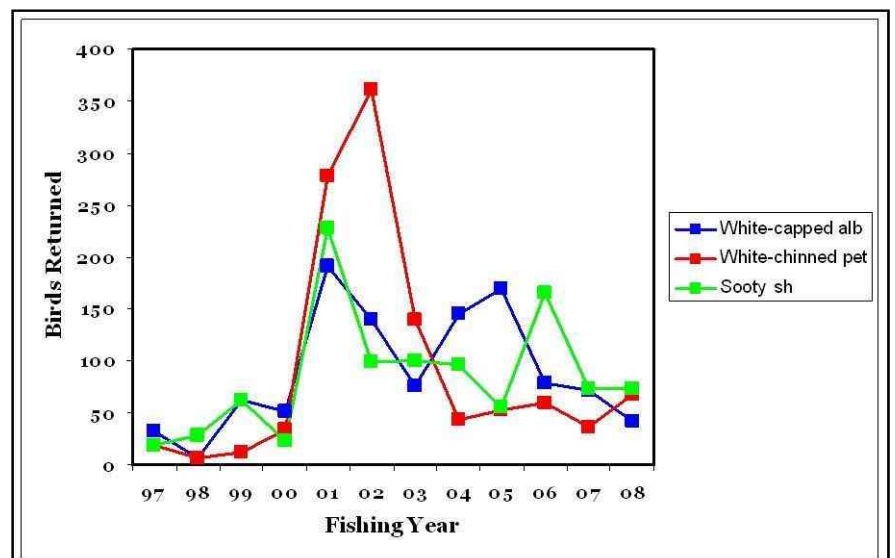
NIWA has released a progress report on Seabird Autopsy figures for the 2007-08 fishing year. 275 specimens from 21 identifiable taxa were autopsied. Bullers and white capped albatross, white chinned petrels and sooty shearwaters, are approx 80% of that total. Most birds are captured in February to April each year, as these months coincide with major fisheries (squid in particular) overlapping the birds feeding range during breeding seasons, and times of high observer coverage. Note the 1997 to 2000 figures are low due to less focus on seabird captures.

In relation to the deep-sea trawl fishery the graph (below) shows the fleet making big reductions in the white capped albatross captures over the last three years. The Fleet has concentrated on what was a “warp capture” problem using effective offal control measures coupled with the introduction of mandatory seabird scaring devices. This fishery could now be classed as a “net captur” fishery. Sooty

shearwaters (mutton birds) show a steady number in the graph as mitigating the capture of these “kamikaze” net divers is very difficult but focus on offal control will help.

There will always be seasonal fluctuations and some captures are inevitable, but the overall observed trend with good observer coverage shows the efforts of many are paying off. Mitigating net captures is much more complex, dealing with species that are instinctively programmed to dive on the net in flocks, 100 m behind the vessel, is very difficult. Real-time management during high risk periods is going to take more effort to get across to those out on the water, who have many considerations to manage in what's already a very difficult environment in which to work. There is no “magic bullet”- education and improved onboard management practices are the key to minimising risk of seabird captures.

John Cleal-DWG Seabird liaison Officer.



Seabird Autopsy NIWA Graph

Seabird Standards

It has been almost a year since MFish released its draft Seabird Standard and revised the National Plan of Action for Seabirds (NPOA). The widespread opposition to the draft standard from all submitters, including industry and environmental groups, has now resulted in the establishment of a new, collaborative process to develop a management framework for seabirds.

The MFish "standard" consisted of a single annual numerical threshold for all fisheries and seabird species. Four options were proposed, ranging between 500 and 2,000 seabirds (compared with the current estimate of fishing related mortality of 3,000 to



WHICH COUSIN OF MINE IS THIS?



These cousins are sometimes known as 'stinkers' as they can spit foul smelling oil when threatened.

If you know the name of this bird then email your answer, name, postal address and date of publication to albertross@fishinfo.co.nz

BE IN TO WIN: Albert Ross' cap and the "Field Guide to New Zealand Seabirds"



The cousin of last month: Antipodean (wandering) Albatross - Juvenile

11,500 seabirds). If the threshold was triggered, the Minister would consider whether additional management interventions were required. The standard was to be implemented through the MFish-led fisheries plan process.

SeaFIC's response to the draft standard was informed by a series of industry workshops. The industry's main concern was that a single numerical standard for all seabirds and all fisheries is meaningless it serves no useful purpose. A government-based approach to implementation creates poor incentives for industry mitigation initiatives and is contrary to our rights-based fisheries management regime.

SeaFIC's preferred approach (set out in our submission) is to have a process standard rather than a performance standard for seabirds. A process standard would outline how to assess fishing-related risks to seabird species, enabling the cumulative effects of fishing on vulnerable seabird populations to be avoided or mitigated through targeted fishery-level responses. A collaborative fishery-specific planning process could be used to develop best practice mitigation

guidelines and determine monitoring requirements and other management measures. Implementation would be via mandatory vessel-specific seabird mitigation plans backed up by an industry training programme, and additional regulatory support if necessary.

While aspects of this alternative approach could be developed through a collaborative process involving industry, government and other stakeholders (such as the process that has recently been set up), the "implementation" element should remain primarily an industry responsibility.

With all parties working together, and with a common goal, a collaborative approach will produce a balanced result that should have an impact out on the water. This, after all, is where it all matters in the end!

Nici Gibbs (SeaFIC)

DID YOU KNOW?

The total grey headed albatross population is estimated at 600,000, but all monitored populations are in sharp decline.

To learn more go to www.albertross.co.nz and pick up this month's issue



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